

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2083

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO NIACT IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 6597

BRASILIA OR RIO DE JANEIRO PASS SUBSTANCE TO AFL/CIO
DELEGATION

DEPT FOR ARA LABOR ADVISOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, AIFLD, AR

SUBJECT: AFL/CIO SOLIDARITY VISIT

REF: BUENOS AIRES 6416

1. LEST THE TONE OF REFTEL MISLEAD MEMBERS OF AFL/CIO
SOLIDARITY TEAM, FOLLOWING FACTORS SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO
THEIR ATTENTION SO THAT THEY FULL APPRECIATE SITUATION
HERE ON EVE OF THEIR ARRIVAL:

A. ALTHOUGH THE NEW TRADE UNION LAW MAY BE ISSUED IN
NEAR FUTURE AND THERE ARE RUMORS GOVERNMENT MAY BE RECON-
SIDERING TRADE UNION RECOGNITION ISSUE WITH VIEW TO
LIBERALIZING SOMEWHAT, THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT
PRESSURES CONTINUE ON TOP LABOR LEADERS MOST CONNECTED
WITH THE PERONIST PAST TO QUIT THEIR JOBS. DESPITE PERIODIC
NEWS RELEASES THAT NEW LAW ABOUT TO BE ISSUED HERALDING
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A NEW ERA OF TRADE UNION LIBERTY, THE MOST CONCRETE
DEVELOPMENT OVER PAST 18 MONTHS HAS BEEN FURTHER INTER-
VENTIONS OF UNIONS AND THE FORCING OUT OF SOME LEADERS
FROM THEIR POSITIONS. WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN TO
OUR KNOWLEDGE NO FURTHER MOVES AGAINST TRADE UNION LEADERS
THAN THOSE REPORTED EARLIER, MANY ARE FEELING THE EFFECTS
OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE BEING LAUNCHED AGAINST THEM.

THERE SEEMS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S LONG RANGE POLICY IS TO HAVE REMOVED THE MAJORITY OF TOP TRADE UNION LEADERS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH PAST PERONIST GOVERNMENTS, THUS MAKING ROOM FOR A NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS WHICH THE GOVERNMENT PRESUMABLY BELIEVES WILL BE MORE MANIPULABLE.

B. THE LABOR MINISTER'S AUTHORIZATION FOR THE VISIT FALLS WITHIN PARAMETERS OF THE VIDELA'S ADMINISTRATION GENERALLY OPEN-DOOR POLICY WITH RESPECT TO FOREIGN CRITICS. VIDELA'S PEOPLE GENERALLY SUBSCRIBE TO VIEW THAT THINGS IN ARGENTINA ARE NOT AS BAD AS THEY ARE MADE OUT TO BE ABROAD AND GOVERNMENT STANDS TO GAIN FROM ANY OBJECTIVE VISIT BY FOREIGNERS. MOREOVER, OFFICIALS PROBABLY BELIEVE THAT DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION REPERCUSSIONS WOULD BE WORSE IF GOA WERE TO PROHIBIT SUCH A VISIT. IN THIS CASE PARTICULARLY GOA AUTHORITIES TOLERATE VISIT, AS THEY SEE IT AS PART OF A SERIES OF U.S. OFFICIAL VISITS WHICH HOPEFULLY MIGHT RESULT IN AN IMPROVED VIEW OF ARGENTINA.

C. HOWEVER, IT CANNOT BE SAID THAT GOA REALLY "WELCOMES" THE VISIT. RATHER, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS SEEM RESIGNED TO IT, AS THEY SEE NO EASY WAY OF TURNING IT OFF. ALTHOUGH LABOR MINISTRY IS PUTTING BEST FACE POSSIBLE ON THE VISIT, THERE IS AN UNDERCURRENT OF CRITICISM (OF VIDELA) WITHIN CERTAIN ELEMENTS OF THE ARMED FORCES, CONFIDENTIAL

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PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE HEAVY CONCENTRATION OF OFFICIAL U.S. VISITORS THROUGHOUT THE MONTH OF AUGUST. WE HAVE HEARD MURMURINGS, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT MILITARY ELEMENTS ARE UNHAPPY PARTICULARLY ABOUT THE INCLUSION OF LEADERS OF INTERVENED UNIONS SUCH AS TACONNE AND CAMPOS IN THE WELCOME COMMITTEE. NEVERTHELESS, LABOR SUBSECRETARY DALL'ASTA ASSURED US THERE WOULD BE NO ATTEMPT TO PREVENT SOLIDARITY TEAM FROM SEEING SUCH EX-LEADERS WHO ARE NOT RECOGNIZED BY GOVERNMENT.

D. ADDITIONAL DISTURBING FACTOR IS THAT FIET ORGANIZER ARTEGOITIA HAS IMPRESSION FROM TALKING WITH LABOR MINISTER LIENDO THAT POSTAL LEADER BALDASSINI AND COMMERCIAL WORKER LEADER BARRANZA HAVE FALLEN FROM LIENDO'S FAVOR. THIS IS PARTICULARLY CRUCIAL FOR CARRANZA, AS HE IS HANGING ONTO HIS JOB BY A STRING (AND CURRENTLY IS ON "ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE"). BASIS FOR LIENDO'S WRATH SEEMS TO BE THAT THE TWO LEADERS, BOTH OF WHOM HERETOFORE WERE CONSIDERED SOLIDLY WITHIN THE "POPULIST" VIOLA-LIENDO POLITICAL SPHERE (I.E. CO-OPTED POLITICALLY BY THAT

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O 031606Z SEP 77 CORRECTED COPY FOR MRN
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 6597

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MRN 6597 VICE 00002 AS VALIDATED)

PARTICULAR SECTOR OF THE ARMY), WERE MOST RESPONSIBLE FOR ORGANIZING THE ICFTU VISIT IN FEBRUARY. LIENDO'S COMMENT IS INCIDENTALLY RELEVANT BECAUSE IT POINTS UP A CHARACTERISTIC TACTIC OF ATTEMPTING TO DIVIDE FOREIGN CRITICS BY BAD-MOUTHING ICFTU IN PRESENCE OF AFL/CIO SUPPORTS, -- AND VICE VERSA. THE CRITICISM IS MAINLY SIGNIFICANT, HOWEVER, BECAUSE IN THE PRESENT CONTEXT IT SUGGESTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS EMBARKED ON A POLICY OF PUNISHING LABOR LEADERS WHO HAVE TIES WITH ANY INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION ENTITIES WHICH HAVE BEEN OUTSPOKENLY CRITICAL OF GOA LABOR POLICIES. CERTAINLY, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE NOT BEEN RELUCTANT TO INSINUATE THAT SUCH TIES HAVE BEEN A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR IN RECENT DECISION TO INTERVENE UNIONS OR PRESS FOR THE REMOVAL OF THEIR LEADERS.

2. NOTWITHSTANDING THE THREATS INHERENT IN GOA POLICY, LOCAL LEADERS ARE LOOKING FORWARD WITH HIGH EXPECTATIONS TO AFL/CIO VISIT. WHEN UNION LEADERS PASSED REQUEST THROUGH LABATT FOR AFL/CIO VISIT IN JULY, LABATT CAUTIONED THEM THAT BY SO DOING THEY COULD BE INCREASING THE RISK OF REPRISALS. THE LEADERS INVARIABLY REPLIED THAT THEY
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FULLY UNDERSTOOD THE RISKS INVOLVED, BUT FELT THAT THEY

HAD NOTHING TO LOSE AS THEIR PROSPECTS FOR SURVIVAL AS LEADERS WERE DIM ANYWAY AND PERHAPS THE AFL/CIO VISIT COULD HAVE A BENEFICIAL EFFECT.

3. FOR DEPT. LOCAL LABOR LEADERS BELIEVE IT IMPERATIVE THAT AFL-CIO APPEAR TO BE GIVEN HIGH LEVEL CONSIDERATION BY GOA THAN THAT ACCORDED RECENT WCL-CLAT VISIT. LATTER HAD INTERVIEWS WITH CGT INTERVENTOR AND LABOR MINISTER ONLY. THEY WERE NOT GIVEN ACCESS TO PRESIDENT VIDELA IN CONTRAST WITH ICFTU GROUP WHICH HAD FRIENDLY MEETING WITH PRESIDENT IN FEBRUARY. LOCAL LEADERS ARE PRESSING HARD IN THEIR REQUEST THAT AFL-CIO PRESIDENT MEANY SEEK APPOINTMENT WITH VIDELA, WHO ARRIVES WASHINGTON 11 AM, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, AND STAYING MADISON HOTEL.

4. REQUEST DEPT ASCERTAIN AFL-CIO PRESIDENT'S DECISION IN THIS MATTER. ETCHEVERRY, THROUGH LABOR MINISTERY, IS SEEKING APPOINTMENT FOR AFL-CIO SOLIDARITY TEAM WITH INTERIM PRESIDENT, GENERAL DIAZ BESSONE, BUT IT IS QUESTIONABLE, GIVEN INTRAMILITARY INSTITUTIONAL RIVALRY, WHETHER LIENDO WILL PASS ON THIS REQUEST TO DIAZ BESSONE. MOREOVER, MEETING WITH LATTER WOULD NOT BE NEARLY AS USEFUL AND IMPORTANT AS MEETING WITH VIDELA. CHAPLIN

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